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ARE SWEET DREAMS MADE OF THIS?

Tourism in Bali and Eastern Indonesia

By John McCarthy

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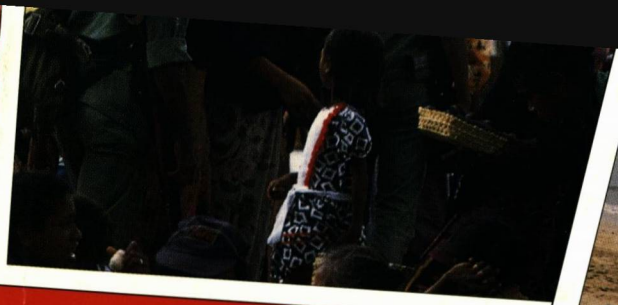

IRIP

ARE SWEET DREAMS MADE OF THIS?

Tourism in Bali and Eastern Indonesia

By John McCarthy

Sweet dreams are made of these
And who am I to disagree
I've travelled the world and the seven seas
Everyone's looking for something
Some of them want to use you
Some of them want to be used by you...

The Eurythmics

Indonesia Resources and Information Program (IRIP) 1994

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SINGAPORE
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PAPUA NEW GUINEA
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LOMBOK
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SUMBAWA
SUMBA
EAST TIMOR
WEST TIMOR
AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

'The areas of Southeast Asia that are quiet, peaceful and possess spectacular scenery and diverse cultures have a great opportunity to develop tourism.'[1]
President Suharto, launching *Visit Asean Year*, January, 1992.

Time and again, Indonesia has proved far more popular than anyone expected. Tourism is booming. In 1992, over three million tourists visited Indonesia, 29% more than expected.

And the tourists are no longer just heading for Java and Bali; many visit other places, including the least developed part of the country, the islands stretching from Bali to Irian Jaya.

While in Western Indonesia the government is promoting industry, in Eastern Indonesia tourism has a major role in the official development strategy. In 1993, the Garuda In-flight magazine reported that 'the government believes that the best way to develop the outlying regions is to capitalise on the natural and cultural assets of each island region via tourism'.[2] To help this process, the government is building resorts modelled on Bali's luxury enclave, Nusa Dua.

Yet many Indonesians worry about the social and environmental impact of tourism. Commenting on President Suharto's speech at the beginning of 1992, the editors of the newspaper *Kompas* pointed out that 'if nature and culture are indeed our biggest capital, they must be protected. We must be clever to protect ourselves and be courageous in finding an acceptable limit to development so that we don't entirely surrender to the dynamics of capital. The beauty of nature in Java and the beaches of Bali already signal the need for such a limit because the dynamics of industry do not recognise beauty. Yet, not only tourists but the local people themselves need nature: for nature guards our spiritual balance.'[3]

This study aims to consider the case of tourism in Eastern Indonesia. Based on the author's visits to the region and interviews with local people and experts, it sets out to bring together the often contradictory facts and points of view surrounding the issues. Rather than trying to reconcile these ambiguities, the report hopes to provoke discussion, to pose the question, *Are Sweet Dreams Made of This?*

The impact of tourist development on the natural environment is too great to ignore. Although the issue is receiving attention, obstacles stand in the way of an environmentally sensitive tourism. First, the environment is still a low priority on the agenda of many developers. Second, for people living in poverty, the need to eke out an existence takes precedence over caring for nature.

At the Pacific and Asia Travel Association conference in Bali in 1992, the tourism industry discussed alternative models of tourism. The concerns driving such discussions are commendable. This study argues that thoughtful planning is essential if tourists are to avoid destroying what they came to enjoy. If eco-tourism is to succeed, it must be carefully implemented.

Sweet Dreams accepts that a tourism explosion in some parts of Eastern Indonesia may be inevitable and that tourism has to bring benefits to the national and local economies. For, with the rest of us, Indonesians want development and industrialisation. As these processes are deeply ambiguous, tourism needs to be seen in this context.

However *Sweet Dreams* tries to move beyond the analysis that commends development for development's sake. Such accounts see the gross figures that show a huge rate of growth and assume that profits 'trickle down' through the community. But do local people in tourism areas benefit from this huge increase?

The Bali case study shows that people from all positions in society can benefit from tourism. However, *Sweet Dreams* argues that what makes tourism in Indonesia so poignant is that, given the way those at the top have access to economic and social opportunities, those at the bottom have the least to gain. They tend to stay poor. This is most obvious in Lombok and Irian Jaya. As tourism in Bali involved the local people from the early days, the situation there is more equivocal. Yet even in Bali the luxury tourist enclaves tend to displace locals.

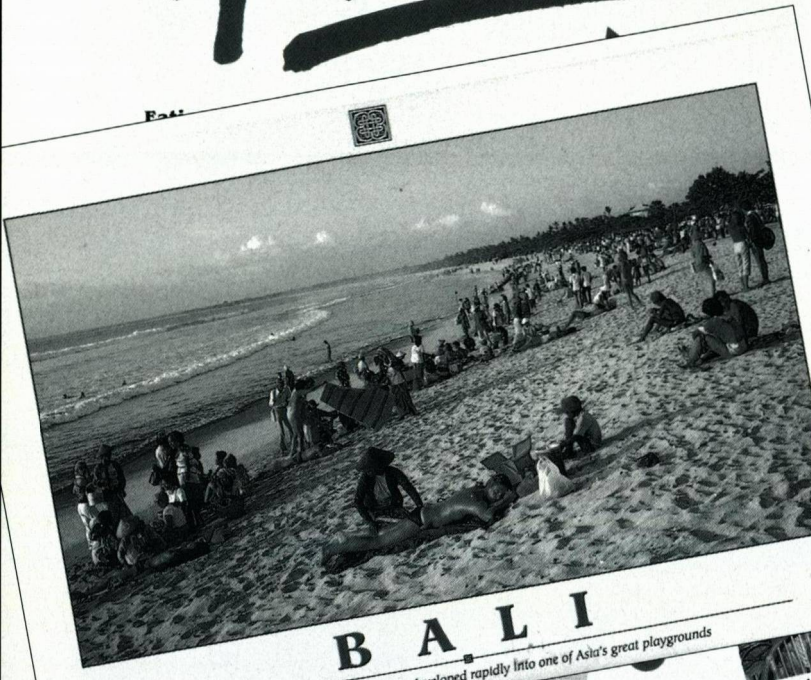
This report begins with Bali, though strictly speaking Bali is not a part of Eastern Indonesia. Tourists have been a feature of the Balinese landscape since the 1930s,

and Bali is the pilot project for tourist development in Indonesia: policies developed in Bali are now being moved East. Tourist Bali serves as a point of comparison for the case studies presented in the later chapters: Lombok, East Timor and Irian Jaya.

The last three chapters consider issues surrounding tourism in Eastern Indonesia. Why do tourists visit Eastern Indonesia? Why is the Government so keen to promote tourism there? And what are the implications of tourism in the poorest part of Indonesia? Some explanation for including East Timor in this study is required. Its inclusion should not be interpreted to mean that either the author or publisher accept East Timor's formal incorporation into Indonesia. The people of East Timor have not exercised their right of self-determination and the political status of the territory is still to be resolved by the United Nations. However, because East Timor is subject to Indonesian administrative control and the Indonesian government has opened it to tourism since 1989, it was considered interesting and useful to include this troubled territory in the pages that follow.

go Bali

ng Zone. Feel like a coldie? - then the T.Z.
s the longest bar in Bali and the tinnies
Ask "Squirrel", the head barman about
ails . . . they're wild.
Zone. Our Beer Garden is a favourite
cially because there's a live band and
You get new friends as quickly as you



B A L I

Beach in southern Bali has developed rapidly into one of Asia's great playgrounds

...e for tennis?

TZ-Fashion parade

Live Band

BALI

'Finally, he made it onto the beach and saw, with disappointment and disgust, white bodies covering the sand in every direction. Tourists.

A man in a safari suit slid past whispering, 'Night spot, night spot', trying to catch his eye. Matt squinted at him, looked away and then back again. The man's face offered something repulsive while the rest of him seemed to be sucked backwards into the crowd.

Matt dragged his suitcase a few metres across the sand and looked out over the water. The sea was a dull grey.

Halfway down the beach an Indonesian boy climbed onto a dirt bike. It roared to life. Blue smoke drifted across dishevelled bodies. The boy dropped a wheelie, kicking up sand, struggling for control. Three of his friends, lying on either side of a big white woman in a g-string, looked up and giggled. The boy on the bike weaved his way down to the wet sand and then tore off at speed to the far end of the beach.

Matt pulled his suitcase across to a quiet area and sat down. He was the only person on the beach who was fully clothed – hat, white shirt, khaki shorts and Greek sandals. Near him was a group of Germans and further down an Australian family buying peanuts.

A young man in a baseball cap strolled up, rubbing a carving with a cloth.

'Tirty tousand,' the man said, holding it out.

The carving was a thin old man resting on a staff. Matt's auntie had one in her flat in Bexley...

...Next was a man selling jewellery, 'Looking, jus looking'. Matt stood and skirted round the small box pushed against his chest. He glimpsed a brown hand rearranging rings and bracelets against a piece of purple velvet.

'No thanks.'

He could see a third salesman loping up as he grabbed his bag and headed down towards the airport where the beach appeared less crowded, about three hundred metres away.

He was desperate to be alone. He needed time to think through what was happening here, to the Balinese. It was terrible. One of the world's most refined and spiritual cultures had been corrupted totally.'

Thus begins *Troppo Man,* Gerald Lee's novel about Matt, a naive Australian visiting Bali for the first time. How many tourists, with expectations fed by glossy images of 'cultural Bali', are let down by 'tourist Bali' – the commercial and cultural exploitation of Kuta?

In Lee's novel Matt comes in search of the noble savage of mystical, artistic Bali. While keen to rise above the tourists he so despises, Matt's claim to superiority rings hollow. The cliches catch Matt as much as tourist traps snare the tourists – the holiday makers who only leave the hotel pool for short sallies to trance dances, puppet shows and cremations.

Cliches abound about Bali. In glossy tourist pamphlets Bali is the 'Island of the Gods', a place 'where reality and fantasy blend together to create an island totally unique'. This is the Bali discovered in the 1930s, a paradise of stunning *legong* dancers and emerald sunsets over palms and rice paddy.

Although the alluring image of the 'land of the lotus eaters' persists, Bali has another representation: the kitsch Hawaii of Australian folklore -'I've been to Bali too!'. This is the place where, so the cliche goes, Australians disco and pub crawl at Third World prices. This is the Bali tourist guide books and social commentators bemoan, a place of inexorable cultural and environmental decay.

A tourist centred passage of Bill Dalton's *Indonesia Handbook* tells the tired cliche of tourist ravaged Bali.

'Bali has been degenerating into a tourist colony for well nigh 50 years now – an Island of Capri of the Western Pacific. Numbers of tourists and earnings from tourism have doubled each year since 1970 ...At last their unbelievably complex social and religious fabric is breaking down under the onslaught. Now you see signs: 'Cremation! Rp5000! Book here!' and revered Hindu priests wear graffiti art T-shirts...

You used to be able to leave your bag in the open anywhere on the island for

three days and nothing would move it but the wind. Not any more. Thefts of tourist belongings are a regular occurrence, and for the first time in its history you see rubbish piles: banana leaves decompose; plastic doesn't. Its art is living on borrowed time. Communities are becoming unwilling to subsidise the high cost involved in the sumptuous ceremonies, music and dance troupes, new costumes and masks for actors, etc., preferring the more desirable comforts of Western technology. Prices are getting higher, money minded people in the tourist ghettos like Sanur, Kuta, and Denpasar hassle you, the sound of motorbikes is constant, quality of paintings and carvings is declining, etc. – you've heard it all before...'

Dalton, like Matt, is not alone in his dismay: it is now routine to lament the effect of tourism on Balinese culture. Tourism has always been about to despoil Bali, corrode the island's harmonious lifestyle and commercialise its unique religious art and dance. In 1940 Philip Hanson Hiss, an American museum curator, wrote that in one way the Second World War was a blessing: it would halt the tourist trade to Bali. 'Perhaps it has delayed for a year, or even a decade, the fateful dissolution of Balinese culture.'[4]

However Dalton is not immune to the timeless charms of the 'other' exotic Bali: 'There are hundreds of villages on the island which haven't changed since Covarrubias' book (written in the 1930s); you don't need directions, just head for the hills. The best things are still free: orange and gold tropical sunsets, an astoundingly rich culture, the dynamite smiles of the children, the sound of the palms. You can still get into hundreds of temple dances free, and live well for US$6 a day or less.'[5]

Later in this chapter we will discuss the effect of tourism on Balinese culture. First it is necessary to consider the history and nature of tourism in Bali.[6]

A tourism strategy

Bali has always been the hub of the tourist trade in Indonesia – it was a tourist destination in the 1930s. Government involvement in tourism stretches back to the Sukarno period when, using Japanese war reparation money, construction began on the first luxury hotel built to international standards, the Bali Beach Hotel. However during this period of political and economic instability few tourists came to Bali.

This era ended when General Suharto came to power in 1967. One of the New Order's primary objectives was to rebuild the shattered economy of the country